

## The Field Where You Died

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Summary: Two FBI agents. A farm. A community on the verge of Doomsday. Sounds Familiar? an Xfiles!Everlark take on one of my favorite episode of the X-Files series.

### The Field Where You Died

You'd think after years in the Bureau, I'd be used to waiting for hours in a car in the middle of nowhere.

But apparently, patience isn't what got me through Quantico or college. It's not that I don't like stake outs, they are a complete part of my job, but here, in the middle of the New Mexican Desert, in a black SUV, it turns out to be a challenge. But it could be worst, we could be waiting in the van.

At least in the car, we have good music and cheese buns, both of them thanks to my partner, Peeta Mellark, who's the expert at everything that belongs to the bread family, who has, in turn, been well educated in matters of music thanks to yours truly.

Peeta and I have been partners for four years now, and we can say he's everything I'm not. He graduated college in psychology and arts, because obviously one major isn't enough. He went through Quantico with high scores, and landed in the white collar division, before switching to the New Mexican bureau in Albuquerque to get more action. That's where we were partnered.

I can still remember the day he came in, all blonde curls and blue eyes, going through the automatic doors of the office smoothly, because of course his badge worked directly, stealing the breath of most of the women and some of the men in the office. He walked into the large room where our offices were located, searching for Haymitch's name on one of the doors, completely unaware of the effect he had.

I knew he was my new partner as Johanna, my former one, took a job in D.C in some fancy new unit and there was no other position to fill. I received several messages from different colleagues during his stay in Haymitch's office to offer to switch partners, but there was no way I could end up with Clove Anderson or Ben "Marvel" Sommers any day soon if I could avoid it.

So here I am now, sitting in an SUV, parked on the top of a small rocky hill, taking over the view of the buildings down there. We are on a stake-out for a community allegedly on the verge of a doomsday event, their farm a beautiful shade of green in the middle of the orange rocky desert.

And it's burning hot.

I shift in my seat for the tenth time in less than a minute, trying to find a position that wouldn't be too hard on my tired and aching body, and take the opportunity to grab a cheese bun from the brown bag leaning between us.

To find nothing.

"Peeta?"

"Um?" He doesn't even bother to look up from the file he's reading, because that's how Peeta is, serious and thorough in almost everything he does.

"PEETA!"

He finally looks up, his baby blue eyes magnified by the glasses he's wearing, a lock of blond hair falling over his forehead.

"What? We have to go?"

"No. Worse."

A smile forms at the corner of his mouth, because of course he somehow knows what I have to say is not work related.

"What can be worse than having to go?"

I sigh. Sometimes I wonder how such a brilliant brain can be so clueless at the obvious things around him. We are facing a high-level emergency.

"No more cheese buns!"

"No more cheese buns? There were sixteen of them!"

"Were. Now they have disappeared. Any explanation for that, Mulder?"

"I'm not the physicist here, Everdeen. I only ate two. That leaves fourteen disappeared buns. I wonder where they can be? Did you search your stomach?"

"Ah! Of course this would be my fault!"

"There were sixteen. I ate two. So unless E.T and his band of friends

came down on Earth just to eat them, there is no other rational explanation than to assume you ate them."

"I might have taken one or two."

"Or fourteen."

"Whatever. The problem is, why did you only bring sixteen?"

"Because I only made sixteen this morning."

With that he turns back to the file he's reading, moving the first page with a picture up, perusing the page for information he might find useful.

"You don't want to take a look?" He asks, pointing at the papers he's going through.

"I'm hungry."

"You're always hungry, that's no news. Read. It will help pass the time."

"Yeah, as if."

Peeta turns to look at me over the rim of his black glasses.

"So at least you know who not to shoot?"

"You're hilarious, Mellark, really. Sure you want to bring up our ranging scores here?"

"You'd be surprised. So start with this one. He's at the top of the pyramid. Coriolanus Snow."

"What's that name? Coriolanus? Is it even real?"

"Yup." He passes me a huge, heavy folder, before turning and searching through his bag on the back seat of the car, coming up finally with a brown paper bag.

"Here. For your well-being."

I know my eyes have started sparkling at the view of the bag.

"More cheese buns?"

"Cinnamon rolls. Sorry to disappoint."

"This will have to do. The sacrifices I make!"

I pick a roll, and pretend to suffer through all the eating, when really, Peeta's pastries are just that amazing. I'm licking the sugar from my fingers when the radio starts buzzing.

"Unit 46, report to HQ."

"Guess it's time for action" Peeta smirks, taking the mike. "Roger that, HQ, on our way." He places his sunglasses on before he hands me the file he was reading, and starts the engine.

The headquarters of Operation "Wheat Field" are located a few miles back from the farm, and it takes us a few minutes to get there. Just enough time to grab another roll, and silently thank my parents for the good constitution they gave me " I wouldn't have survived this partnership for years if I didn't have good genes. The amount of pastries I eat is just insane.

When you think about headquarters, you'd imagine buildings with A/C, coffee machine and quiet steps, muffled by carpet all around. Not an assembly of vans, scattered around a tent in the heavy New-Mexican air. But that's what we lucky guys get. Our boss is there, a phone tucked between his ear and his shoulder, staring at blueprints of the community, all the while shaking his free hand in the unmistakable sign of him asking for more coffee.

That's the vision that greets us as we exit our government-issued car, and walk towards the table side by side, as is our habit. Habit that comes after years of working together, building a solid partnership based on trust, confidence in the other abilities, each one completing the other perfectly.

I trust Peeta with my life on a regular basis. He's one of the few constants in my life, a rock I can grab onto when I need it " and I know I am for him too. Too many times to count now, I've been woken up by his nightmares while on stakeouts or when sharing a room. We've both been broken, having seen more than our share of horrors during our years of service within the Bureau.

"Finally! Where have you both been?" Haymitch grumbles, rivulets of sweat falling down his neck into the collar of his shirt, his hair ruffled by too many gusts of wind.

"Arriving. What do we do now?" I step toward the table on which the plans are spread, Peeta taking the place on the other side, both of us studying the maps. Units are marked on it, color-coded for each department of the police force to show how the deployment of police forces are dispatched around the farm.

"You go in. Both of you with a team from the ABQ PD, and you try to put some kind of reason into their brains." Yes, Haymitch can be hilarious, sometimes apparently. Peeta looks up from the map I know he's committing to memory in case it could be of use later, arches an eyebrow at me with a silent question I answer with a nod, then goes back to writing in his little black notebook.

"And why would we be going in rather than another team?" I say, an echo to my silent conversation with my partner.

"Ha!" Haymitch extends his arms as if I have asked the silliest question in the world, one he had answered two thousand times already, looking at me as if I was five.

"I'm so glad you asked, Sweetheart" he mocks me, again, calling me by a pet name I hate. And I know he's doing it to annoy me - which it does - but I won't let him know how much. He smiles, the smug bastard, and looks directly between Peeta and me, before pointing at my partner. "Because one of you has a degree in psychology, maybe? And if he goes, you go. So get ready, you're to meet Sheriff Boggs at 1600 in front of the farm. No need to grab all your weapons, they are

not dangerous."

"Yeah, doomsday cults are not dangerous, that's why they kill themselves."

"They're not dangerous to others, Agent Everdeen." The woman talking, Marshal Jackson, was the head of the USMS team displayed along the local police department, FBI offices and all the authorities present in the headquarters. "They only want to reach Heaven forever."

I couldn't wrap my mind around the fact that people were ready to die to reach a forever that wasn't even guaranteed. And bring along their families and friends with them.

I check my gun, making sure it's unloaded, putting the safety on, and holster it, before turning to Peeta. He is still working on the map, looking serious behind his glasses, taking several notes - that's his nature - conscientiousness, precision, thoroughness. While I can go into a room full on, he's the thoughtful one, working each angle before taking his decision. He's the steadiness to my fire, the calm to my tempest.

I wait until Peeta's ready, as Haymitch watches with his trademark grin, making sure my phone is fully charged before we go into the lion's mouth. Because even if they only want to die for themselves, there is no way they're taking us with them.

Peeta finally pockets his black notebook, worn from years of us, and nods slightly, just for me. He's ready.

And so am I. I grab my aviators, put them on and head towards our car. Time to start the show.

Of course, this Church had to choose the hottest day of the summer to drag all the authorities to the middle of the desert. We couldn't go into the farm with our cars, as modern vehicles are prohibited inside, and had to walk all the way to the buildings, passing through fields and crops. Sheriff Boggs sets a rather quick pace, seemingly eager to enter the farm and finish with this case as soon as possible. I can't blame him, I'm feeling the same, and am really not looking forward going all the way back to the car after this meeting is done.

Suddenly, I stop in my tracks. There is something, about this place, something odd, something I feel inside of me - it's as if I came here already. I know that tree, with its dead branch hanging on the right side of it, all cracked, black and dried. I drew it in school, and there's no way it could have been from a memory - my family has lived in Western Virginia forever. I look around, and can't help the feeling of familiarity this place brings into me. I don't know whether I saw it in a movie, or a postcard or anything, but I've seen this place already.

I shake off this feeling of deja-vu - now that I think of it, Dad's always been a fan of westerns, and this place is perfect for a shoot-out- and quickly close the few steps between me and the rest of the team. To my surprise - and Peeta's - we see nobody working in the farms. I might have not spend as much time on the maps as my partner, but on the satellite images we had, there were clearly workers in the field, or tending to the animals. I share a look with my partner, and

I can tell he has noticed too by the slight nod he gives me, taking in the abandoned crops around us.

There is someone waiting for us at the door of what we assume is the common room of the Church of the Seven Stars. A tall, dark-haired man stands patiently under the scorching sun watching our approach. He seems familiar, although I'm pretty sure I've never met him previously.

Without a word, he opens the door for us, holding it to allow us to come inside. The room is dark, lit only by candles, their flame adding to the heat of the weather outside, giving the place a suffocating atmosphere. I really want to get out of here as soon as possible. Out of habit, my eyes look around to assess all possible threats. I know Peeta does the same, adding all the small things that interest him, small things I don't see that he will use in his analysis of the place.

A man is sitting on the first row of benches that fill the large room, facing a kind of altar with dozens of small candles, and at least twice as many white roses. White. It's how I would describe the man. From his hair to his clothes, even his parched skin seems paler than the average person living under the New Mexican sun. I know he heard us - we didn't make any effort at hiding we were coming - but he makes no move to acknowledge us, or to greet us.

The hinges of the door squeak as it closes behind us. I have already checked and I know there are no windows, no easily accessible escape. I focus on the dark shades around the altar, searching for a way out in case of necessity. I know Peeta's doing the same, assessing everything while Boggs and Jackson make their way to the Guy in White.

I feel Peeta's hand on my left arm, a whisper of a touch that in our coded relationship means he's found something. Turning my head slightly, I follow the direction of his gaze. He found it. The way out, the exit. A shade darker than the rest, on the right side of the altar, an anomaly that stuck out now that I'm seeing it. I quickly nod to Peeta, making him understand that I see it too.

Now that our way out is secured, it's easier to focus on the man in front of us. He hasn't moved yet, eyes still fixed on the huge crucifix hanging from the wall, the only sign he's not a statue being the small shaking of his hands on his lap.

"Mr Snow, I'm the Sheriff, this is Marshal Jackson, Agents Everdeen and Mellark" Boggs nods at each one of us as he enunciates our names. Using the pretence to open his suit jacket, Peeta shifts slightly to come closer to the seemingly unflappable man still sitting on the bench.

"Welcome to our humble farm to all of you. Would you like something to drink? Gale, please, can you make some tea?"

We all turn to the tall man who greeted us - Gale - to see him smile at the request of his leader.

"Yes Father Snow."

In almost complete silence - but for the squeaking of the hinges -

the man leaves the room.

"What can I do for the authorities? Did we break some kind of law?"

"We're here for Doomsday, Mr Snow."

"'For behold, the LORD will come in fire And His chariots like the whirlwind, To render His anger with fury, And His rebuke with flames of fire. For the LORD will execute judgment by fire And by His sword on all flesh, And those slain by the LORD will be many.' That's what's written in the Bible".

Boggs's hand moves to his hat, moving it to the back of his head, as if he was searching for what to say.

"Or as the Greeks would interpret it, a revelation." Peeta chimes in, coming to the rescue of the Sheriff.

"Isn't it all the same?" Snow's snaky eyes dart to my partner, dark and full of anger. Yes, this man is dangerous. I feel Peeta tense next to me, a clear sign he has noticed it too.

"Technically no. There's been a lot of manipulation of these. Maybe God only wanted to reveal himself and not burn out real persons?"

"Ah, we're having a scholar, right? I am well aware of the meaning of the word. I am very lucky to have been the recipient of a revelation myself, allowing me to share this knowledge with everyone who is ready to listen."

"Very lucky, indeed" Peeta answers. I know he doesn't want to contradict this Snow man, rather assessing him to see how far and how quickly he would be ready to lead the people living on the farm.

The sound of the squeaking hinges echoes in the room again, making us all turn our heads towards the man coming in, a tray in his hand. He takes his hat off and bends down on one knee, saluting the room before walking to us without making any noise.

There is something so utterly familiar in the man's grey eyes, dark hair and olive-toned skin - so much like mine it's almost frightening - we could be brothers or cousins. He shifts his gaze from his tray to my eyes, and I'm hit with a vision of the two of us walking hand in hand in a forest. But in this daydream, he's a native-american woman, and I'm his husband.

â€"

I make my way out of the room as fast as I can on shaky legs - I need to sit down, but can't do it in here, can't seem weak in front of that man, can't let him know. I see the concern in Peeta's eyes as I mumble an excuse to leave the place, and try to convey my best "everything's fine I'll tell you later" look. Everything is far from being fine. First the tree, now the guy? What the hell is going on?

I find a large log of wood on which I sit, closing my eyes and trying to breathe deeply to loosen the ball I feel in my chest, tightening

so much it's frightening.

The rational part of my brain tries to tell me I must have met this guy in some place, that his likeness to me must have left an impression in my memory, even if I don't recall any of it.

The other part of my brain, though, connects the tree, the man, the vision, and shouts at me that it really happened - but I can't seem to understand how.

The large wooden door opens again, to let out the silhouette of the man -Gale if I remember correctly - searching for something, until he lays his eyes on me.

"Father Snow sent me to check on you."

"Katniss!" the reassuring voice of my partner already makes me feel better as I see Peeta coming out of the building, concern etched all over his face.

"I'm here, Peeta."

He comes and crunches down in front of me, taking my wrist to check on my pulse - I can tell if he could do a whole exam, he would already have started it.

"i'm okay, don't worry. It was just too sweltering inside. I should have drunk more water before coming in."

"Do you want some water Miss?" the man in grey asks, concerned. "I can go fetch some. Or some tea?"

"I'm okay, don't worry -"

"Yes, some tea would be lovely, thank you." Peeta chimes in, interrupting me. I look at him, angrier than I should be.

Gale leaves immediately, walking quickly towards another building located a bit off the main street.

"Peeta! I'm fine, really!"

"I know you are. Can you tell me what happened back there ? You blanched, then started shaking before you left! What's going on, Katniss?"

"It's the room, I felt like suffocating."

"The room, really?"

"Yeah, it was so warm and so hotâ€¦ I should have drunk more." there was no way I would ever be able to explain to him what happened. Peeta was the cartesian one in our relationship, always planning things ahead, while I was the one coming up with the dumbest and craziest theories - some of them proving to be the good ones. We've always worked like that, and I'm pretty sure he knows me better than my family, but this might be a bit too much for him to take in. I remember the last time I tried to prove Peeta that there was no way we were the only living things in the whole universe, a notion he can't wrap his head around. Even if I prove to him that we would be a



mathematical error in case we were. But no, he needs proofs, needs to see things.

So how do I begin explaining all these crazy deja-vu feelings ?

"We'll talk later" Peeta whispers. I know I'll have to tell him soon as he doesn't believe a word of what I said - I have never been able to lie to him.

The young man comes back - and I can't help seeing him as my wife, again as my head starts spinning again. This needs to stop now. I grab Peeta's arm with all the force I can manage, and hold onto it, as if a lifeline. The litany my therapist made me repeat over and over again during my PTSD a few years ago comes back to me easily. My name is Katniss Everdeen. I'm twenty-nine years old. I live in Albuquerque, New-Mexico. I'm a FBI Agent. My partner is Peeta Mellark. I am safe. Nobody's going to kill me.

On and on I say it in my head, until I can feel my body relaxing a little, that stress ball starting to give up its hold on me. I need to get out of here quickly if I want to keep my sanity. Or what remains of it. Because I'm pretty sure I'm going crazy.

The tea tastes good - funny, as it's a taste I don't know, so far from Peeta's Oolong which is the only tea I usually drink - but has the perks of moisturising my parched throat. I thank the Gale-guy, though I don't dare looking at him again.

I don't want Peeta to leave, although I know he needs to go back inside to finish his evaluation of the Snow guy there, to have information to give Haymitch back.

"Go back in, I can stay alone for a few minutes. I don't mind." I hush him, because it will not be early enough for us to leave this place, so full of craziness.

"Katniss, I can't let you-"

"You don't let me - you've never abandoned me - it's the other way around, remember? Now go - the earlier you finish, the earlier we can go away."

"You sure?" he has that little line, above his eyebrows, his "concern" line that shows up every single time he worries about something.

"I am. Go get him, Tiger", I smack his arm lightly in hopes it passes as cheerful in front of Gale, watch him rise and walk towards the Common Room looking at me over his shoulder more than once, worry still clear on his face. He knows we have a duty, we have a reason to be here - assess the degree of possibility a doomsday could happen here - and prevent it by any mean available.

"Excuse me, Miss, I'm sorry I'm asking, you'll probably think I'm too forward but â€¦" the man takes a deep breath, throwing me a quick glance "I have this feeling that â€¦ I know you?"

I'm struck by his words. He has a feeling he knows me, just as I do.

"I don't know? Maybe?" I try to keep my composure as I answer him. Inside, my heart is beating so fast, it's probably dangerous for my health, while my brain is nearly in overdrive. I'm positive I've never met this guy, but somehow, I know him.

"It's strange, though, because I've never left the farm and I'm pretty sure you never came hereâ€|."

He goes on talking, but I ignore him completely. I zone out, trying to put a word on this all deja-vu thing. That I remember a tree I never saw, that I remember a man I never ever met - it's all too strange for me. Everything is spiralling too quickly - I start saying my mantra again.

"Miss, are you alright?"

I nod at him - I need to get a grip on myself, so I take a deep breath, and stand up.

"I'm fine, thank you." I look at him, expecting Gale to be standing next to me. But he's kneeling now, aiming for my arm so quickly I can't get away. He grabs me with a strong hand on my wrist, his fingers exactly on my pulse point.

"It's a bit too quick for me, really. We should have it checked later, at my office, right? You'll talk to Mrs Langham and tell her you talked to me today, would you? I'll have the leeches ready in case we need them, because all these faintingsâ€| You're not with child, right?"

I can't believe what this man is saying. He's clearly completely lost his mind - I yank my arm and hand away from him quickly, trying to understand what's going on. Is it a prank or something? His eyes are so serious though, and something has â€|shifted in his behavior. He's not the shy man from earlier, eager to please his master. He looks confident, taking charge of a problem that doesn't exist yet. I have absolutely no clue what to answer him, really, when I saw another change. Gone is the pseudo-doctor. In front of me stands someone I can't really describe - he seems like a woman, now.

"You have to go, before my dad finds you ! He will kill you ! You shouldn't be on our land! You need to go" he/she ushers to me, pushing me away from the place I stand in.

"What are you doing ! Get her hands off of her, she's a Federal Agent! Hands up"

Peeta's voice echoes into the desert, and I watch him running out of the house with all the speed he can manage under such heat. I watch his hand is going to the belt of his trousers, where I know the holster of his Glock .22 is. He's staring right at Gale and I know I have to do something to prove to him I'm alright - that's how fucked up our relationship is- we constantly need proof that the other is safe. What happened in Panem is still fresh - even if that was four years ago.

I step in front of Gale, searching my partner's eyes to convey that I'm indeed alright, that nothing happened to me - that I'm safe. He visibly relaxes at my gesture, and I feel the tension starting to

leave my body. Peeta's hand left his back as he rushes towards me, more concern on his face than before he left. He's followed by Boggs and Jackson, who look worriedly at the three of us, until Snow comes out of the Common Room too.

"Gale! Go back to your barracks!"

As if he was snapping out of a trance, the man grabs his discarded grey cap, and hurries to my left, his head down, to an adjacent building without looking back.

"I'm sorry, that he bothered you. Please accept my deepest apologies on his behalf. This won't happen again." Snow's voice was laced with contempt, and as far from sincerity as possible.

"He did nothing wrong." I want to get out of here quickly, but we need to be sure everything's done here before we go back to headquarters, or else Haymitch will have our heads.

"Well, if you don't have any more questions, Agents, I will take my leave now. I'm old and need to rest."

Without waiting for our answers, Snow turns back to the Common Room, closes the heavy door with surprising strength, and we clearly hear the "click" of them being locked.

"Well, I think we've been asked to leave!" Boggs tries to joke as the four of us remain under the setting sun, alone on a dirt square, before taking the path that leads to our car. Jackson follows him closely, leaving Peeta and me alone.

"You okay? What happened over there?"

"I'll tell you at the motel tonight, okay? I don't want to talk about it here!"

"Okay. But tonight, you tell me."

"I will, Peeta, I swear."

I'm not delaying answering his question and he knows it. It took time for us to completely open up to the other. Time, and a lot of pain - we were crushed under a building that exploded in Panem four years ago. Peeta nearly lost his left leg, stuck as it was under a fallen wall of concrete during almost a whole day, while I was locked in a room on my own, my partner only hearing my voice. During these times, we've been each other's lifelines, holding on for the other out of fear of being left alone to deal with the pain, the dark, and death.

During these twenty-two hours, we talked about everything.. our families, our backgrounds, special friends, favorite colors, everything to keep us alive while hearing the building cracking all around - and under us.

We learnt that night to trust each other with our lives - literally.

We start our way back towards the gate of the compound, catching up with Boggs and Jackson hurriedly, not wanting to spend anymore time

than necessary here. This place makes me so uncomfortable with memories of things I've never seen, or people I've never met. There is a creepy feeling crawling inside of me, urging me to go away and never come back. I shiver and cold sweat falling down my spine, my stomach churning.

Peeta is aware I'm not feeling well, and has this look of concern still glued to his face. I know he wants me to talk to him, to explain what I feel - or not - but also understands I just can't do it here and now.

The drive to the headquarters is quick and filled with silence - and the A/C. I can't believe how good this feels after the scorching heat of the desert sun - I thought I was used to it by now, even started liking it, but apparently, I can still be surprised.

We consciously don't talk about Snow or the common room, or the file. It's our way to let the pressure go down, to have a bit of reprieve until we have to report to HQ.

â€œ

"You're hungry, I hope?" Peeta comes into our motel room carrying boxes of pizzas and a pack of beers, putting everything down on the table against the wall and loosening his tie before taking his vest off. I know very well what comes next. He will undo the first two buttons of his shirt, sighing in relief, then proceed to roll his sleeves up. It's his routine, his way of starting to relax. I know I usually undo my ponytail and braid my hair, only then allowing myself to let go of the tension of the day.

"Silly question, really. You're always hungry." Peeta answers his own question with a wink. I come up to the table, and open the pizza boxes to take a slice and sit on the chair nearby.

As a beer magically appears in front of me, my hand goes straight to the label and starts peeling it off, a sure sign for my partner. I hear the scraping of a chair being dragged on the floor as Peeta takes a seat, grabs a slice of pizza and a drink, and starts waiting. I know he won't pressure me.

When enough time has passed and I've reduced the label to small, unreadable pieces, I start talking. I explain about the feelings of deja-vu, and how crazy they sound, about the tree, the man, his change of personality - and how it didn't scare me as much as it should. How everything seemed familiar even if at the same time, it seemed unreal, as if coming from another life, or maybe another universe. I don't know how to label these flashes or things, that happened to me.

I take a deep breath before I look at Peeta. I've avoided looking at him during my retelling of today's events, not wanting to be disturbed by his piercing blue eyes that I know are analysing my words and attitude as I talk.

"Wow, that's quite a story. And you're sure you never came here, even on one of your hikes?"

"No, I'm sure. I do prefer the woods or the Gardens, you know that. And there's no way I would have come near this place, it's too far

away from the roads to go for a hike."

"And you said the man, Gale right?" he asks, and I nod "Changed his personality? was it just that? or was it more?"

"He changed personality, but there was, how can I tell? He actually kneeled to check on my pulse, you know? Like he wasn't this shy guy under Snow's willpower anymore, but a real doctor, confident, knowing what to do. And then, I don't know, a woman? How could I see a woman in such a tall guy? I can't explain what happened to me, Peeta. I'm afraid â€¦ " I need to finish my phrase, to let him know what I really think. I lower my gaze. "I'm afraid I'm going completely crazy."

I feel a hand on my over my arm, running up and down to comfort me.

"Kat, you're not crazy. I'm not a psychiatrist, but I'm fairly sure from your description this Gale has personality disorders - he creates new characters under stress, and his brain believes he really is this persona he created. Even if it's a woman."

"Really?"

"Yes. You're not crazy. The guy must have been under a lot of stress, and something must have triggered him into this crazy world. He didn't do anything strange?"

Here it is. the part when Peeta will know I'm completely crazy.

"He told me he knew me. When it's impossible as he was born on the farm, and never left."

"It happens. He builds an image of somebody in his mind, and anybody who shares a resemblance to that person becomes the memory. It immerses him in his belief, in his characterization of these other personas."

"But he was himself when he told me that."

"His mind was already slipping. It's nothing."

"But why did it feel so real?"

"I don't know, Kat. I wish I had all the answers to how the human brain works, but I don't."

His hand is still on my forearm, his thumb tracing soothing patterns on my skin, I'm not even sure he realises what he's doing. In any case, it feels good, that bit of human contact, that tiny touch from maybe the only person I trust in this world is soothing, like a wave, washing down my fears and pains away.

We remain silent for I don't know how long, him, tracing circles on my arm, me making balls of peeled labels, not watching each other, not needing to talk.

We finally move to my bed where we start watching some cooking show that suits the both of us - I salivate at the meal displayed on the tv while Peeta dissects every recipe - I'm sure he commits them to

memory to try them on later at his flat. I've been the official taster of so many delicious treats that I can only look forward to the next one.

When we're too tired to watch anymore, we easily slip into our night routine - I shower, he organizes his clothes in neat piles, he showers, i take the knots out of my hair - and ease into sleep as easily as our minds allow us.

She knows she should be in her bed. Her dad has been very insistent about that. The little girl with a dark braid can see her mother's sweaty red face, the doctor urging her to push harder. She wonders if the baby will have her mother's blond hair and curls - but why does she look like a man right now ?

I wake up to the feel of something warm on my skin, way warmer than my clothing should be. I realize the warmth is moving up and down my arm, and that something else passes on my cheeks. I open my eyes, to see fingers brushing my cheek, taking away the tears I know I've shed. I start taking in the place I'm in - in my bed, completely torn into my sheets, sweaty, teary and disheveled. I finally notice whispers near my ear, sweet nothings, then realize that Peeta is holding me close to him, trying to comfort me. I've had nightmares for a long time now, although I never woke up anyone during them.

But tonight, they didn't look like the nightmares I usually have - there is no death, no building exploding or collapsing on me or Peeta, no car accident killing my family over and over again, no shooting in a bank, nothing. Just different scenes of different lives, all involving me, Peeta, and that Gale guy.

"What happened, Katniss? Are you okay? Do you need something? A drink?"

I can only nod my head, I don't trust my voice, or my ability to speak for that matter . My mind is full of images - Peeta giving birth to my sister, Gale whipping a blonde, curly haired slave, or me giving orders to my officers to attack the confederate army in Gettysburg. I know the one who woke me up - it was the vision I had of me being saved by a Peeta-Viking look alike, to be brought to my wife - Gale.

It's so disturbing.

And I can't get rid of how real to me this felt.

Peeta is soon back with a cold washcloth and a glass of water, carefully getting rid of my sweat while I drink.

"You wanna talk about them? It was Panem, right?"

I shake my head as I struggle to find the words.

"No. It was more â€¦ real?"

"More real than being stuck under tons of concrete?" he asks, an eyebrow raised in question.

"No, that was fucking real. It was just like this afternoon, you

know? Like scenes of other lives, of other times? I can't explain, but Gale and you were in all of themâ€¦ I think there could be more â€¦"

I can't tell him what more there is. What I saw, in all these things I've been experiencing, at least one of the people up dead. That was what brought on the nightmares - the fear that someone close to me might die - again.

I shiver at the thought, preventing my mind from thinking about all the losses, all the what-if moments I could have lost someone else, or could have died. There are too many of them for a twenty-nine years old woman, way too many.

I feel my breath quicken as the first signs of anxiety start to spread their icy wings on me, try to fight them on my own when I feel warm hands on my shoulders.

"Hang in there, Katniss. I'm here. You're safe, I'm safe. Stay with me, don't let this thing in your head win. You are so much stronger than what you think. Don't let the dark take you. Remember that day in training, where you kicked the marshal's ass? The big one, Mark Gloss? You remember how you threw him over your shoulder? Do the same here, breathe, exhale, and come back to me."

His words are soothing - as they always are, no matter what the problem is. I know he's looking at me, trying to meet my gaze to see if I'm already gone too far into my anxiety, so I gather all my courage, before raising my eyes to his. His blue eyes are piercing, searching mine for the answers to the questions he won't ask, until he's satisfied.

He finally nods, and I do the same. Our way of letting the other know everything's alright, that we can go on.

With one last motion of his hands, he smiles at me.

"Will you be okay now?" I know if I say no, he'll stay up for as long as I need it.

"Yes. Thank you, Peeta. I need to get my mind working properly before I lose it completely."

"You're not crazy, Kat. The mind has strange ways of working too, sometimes."

"Yeah."

He tucks one strand of hair behind my ear, withdrawing his hands as he backs away from me and my bed to go back to his. Tonight, I can't stand it. I grab his arm quickly, holding a bit of his warmth back for as long as I can. I don't want to sleep alone tonight, I know I won't be able to on my own. These visions are so fresh and scary - I do not dare thinking about what they mean, what all the possibilities my tired brain comes up with right now. It's too frightening.

Peeta turns to me, a question clear in his eyes. He's worried I'm falling down into anxiety again, that I will have another episode.

"i'm okay." I answer his question immediately. "I just â€¦" I don't know how to ask what I want.

"Yes?"

"It's justâ€¦ I don't want to sleep aloneâ€¦. Will you stay with me?"

We've already shared a bed. Not in the biblical sense, but it happened on deployments when the person in charge of booking only found one room. Peeta always offered to sleep on the floor, and I always offered to share the bed. It was all my profit, he's like a human thermic bomb, making the bed even warmer.

But it's the first time I have asked him to when there is another perfect bed laying three feet away.

He nods, climbs into bed, before settling down, bringing the sheets to his waist, because of course, it's always too warm for him in bed when I snuggle into them until the only visible thing are my hair on the pillow.

We're not facing each other, not spooning, not touching, nothing too close, but it's enough. More than enough. I can hear his breathing, soothing me as surely as his touch did earlier creating a lullaby that brings me to sleep.

I will pretend I never heard Peeta whispering "Always."

â€¦"

I wake up to the familiar male scent of my partner. I'm being surrounded by warmth, a heavy arm holds my waist, a breath tickles my neck. I could stay like this forever, in this cocoon of sheets, peace and quiet.

Until I realize that the arm holding me belongs to Peeta, the habit of sleeping with a girlfriend hard to break - I know holding me was out of reflex.

I wiggle my way out of his embrace to let Peeta sleep - I feel guilty for waking him up at crap am for my crazy stories - before I head to the bathroom.

I try not to think about how good I felt in his arms - I never do. Every time we've shared a bed, it ended up with us snuggled together, my head in the crook of his neck, or him spooning me. We've always avoided the "awakening of shame" when none of us can explain how we managed to arrive in this position.

Every single time, I'm the one who gets out of bed first. We never talk about it.

Never.

As I shower, I start feeling better - these dreams I had, crazy visions of other lives, must have been triggered by this tree, that looked so much like the one I drew as a young girl. It surely brought back images of a happier time, when I could play in the garden of our house, laughing on the swing my father made for me in the old apple



tree.

I quickly wash up and dress, going out of the bathroom to find Peeta on the phone, already fully dressed, running his hand through his hair.

"Yes, Haymitch, we're on our way now".

As soon as I hear the words, I understand there's a problem, I grab my weapon and badge, hand Peeta his vest and put mine on, all the while listening to the conversation.

"No, not more than five minutes and we'll go directly to the farm. We're nearly in the car."

I open the door of the SUV and start the engine immediately, taking the road to the Church of the Seven Stars, breaking every single law along the way, as the urgency in Peeta's tone is proof enough we need to hurry.

"Are they sure ? Everybody? God..even the kids?" There is a blank as Peeta listens intently. "Where are the other teams? What? Who sent them back to Albuquerque? This is crazy!" More silence. "I'll tell Katniss right now. See you there."

Peeta hangs the phone up, and I hear his deep intake of air as he starts to tell what's happening.

"They all gathered in the Common Room. Parents, kids alike, they all went inside. Haymitch thinks we'll be too late."

"Too late? Oh, god, no!" I press the accelerator, trying to get us there as soon as humanly possible, because we both know we risk coming to a mass grave if we're late.

A deafening silence, only broken by the noise of the motor falls in the car, as the seconds tick by too quickly while the miles pass too slowly.

We break the rule of the community as we pass the gates of their property, following the tracks of another vehicle we can see parked in front of us, lights on, doors left opened.

"Haymitch's here." Peeta tries to reach our boss on his phone, even if we know it's useless' the signal is too poor here. He tucks it back into his pocket, waiting for me to park before jumping out of the car.

I leave the car behind us, not caring about leaving everything opened, and rush for the wooden doors.

We are both shocked by what we see. Dozens and dozens of bodies, lying on the ground in circles, around a silhouette dressed in white - Father Snow.

"Some of them are alive!"

I turn my head to the sound of the Haymitch's voice, who's already giving CPR to a woman with red hair. I feel Peeta moving besides me, kneeling to check on the pulse of the people around him. I finally

find the strength to do the same. At my feet lies a girl that cannot be more than twelve years old, with beautiful blonde braids. I put my fingers on the pulse point in her neck, to feel nothing but the cold already spreading in her body.

I feel tears coming to my eyes, ready to be shed, but I fight them back. Next to her is a woman, and I can tell she's dead too - her eyes wide opened. I close them and continue my gruesome search for someone alive when I hear a rattle behind me.

I move quickly to the sound to find myself face to face with Gale.

As I kneel next to him, I take his wrist to move it apart, but he opens his clenched fist. Inside is a little vial, still filled with a third of his content.

"I wanted to wait for you. To tell you goodbye." he whispers harshly, clearly in pain. "I've loved you in other lives. But in this one, it's his turn."

He's having trouble breathing and talking. I'm left speechless. Other lives? Turn?

"It all started when he brought me back to you - when you were â€| my husband. He saved my life."

His breathing is shallow, I can see him struggling to form the words.

"Weâ€| areâ€| linked. Souls are linked . The three of us. It will always be usâ€|. in every life."

He dies in my arms just after.

â€"

It always takes time to get better after such an event. The official count of the deaths is eighty eight adults and fourteen children under twelve. They died following Coriolanus Snow in his folly, by drinking a mortal concoction that was supposed to bring them to the gates of Paradise.

It takes time to go back to a normal life. We are finally cleared to head back to work together, like everything we do, once the shrink has cleared us.

â€"

It takes time, but I've finally opened an old shoebox full of trinkets from my childhood that my aunt Effie gave me years ago.

Inside, there's my drawing, the one I made at school, during the good old days,. Around a tree that looks exactly like the one I saw on the field, a man that has my features, clearly a Native-American, giving what looks like a dandelion to Peeta who's wearing a golden Viking helmet on his blonde hair and carrying a woman - Gale.

I start shaking, my vision blurred by tears, the same questions

passing through my mind. Questions I've carefully avoided mentioning to the psychiatrist. How would I explain that I think I have lived prior lives without sounding completely insane? I carry a gun every day, after all.

So I do the only thing I do when I'm having problems. I call Peeta.

"Speedy Gonzalez Grill, you catch them, we grill them!" I can hear him laughing on his side of the phone, certainly happy about his latest find in so-called funny answering. That's his thing, nowadays.

"Peeta? Canâ€| " I'm pretty sure I sob into the phone before I can go on.

"I'll be there in ten, Kat. Hang on."

I can't even thank him, the line's already dead when I find my voice again.

He always says he'll be there in ten minutes.

He never does. I think he uses his privileges to be there in less than the ten minutes required to go from his house to my apartment.

I don't even move from my place on the floor of my bedroom, I know he will find me. He will come in, using his key, pat Buttercup on the head before he starts looking for me. Maybe the cat will lead him to me, they have this connection I never could have with my dead sister's evil beast, or maybe he won't need any help. It's not important.

I never hear the door opening, or his steps - and god knows he's a heavy walker - I'm too focused on the drawing in my hands to care. He's there, suddenly, his presence welcomed, the comfort he brings with him, the peace and serenity he shares willingly every time I need soothing. I really don't know if I can live without him. What if this Gale guy was right? What if it was supposed to be us in this life? Is our love predetermined by a connection we had centuries ago? What of free will?

"I don't know, Katniss, really." Once again, I spoke instead of thinking. It's so me I shouldn't even be surprisedâ€|. But this time, it was about something else than Haymitch's horrendous ties. "I know we have something, and it has nothing to do with the Church of the Seven Stars." He sits next to me, taking the drawing into his big hands, studying it carefully.

"Clearly the same tree, and it's us, Kat. We didn't know each other thenâ€| what was it, fifth, sixth grade?"

"Something like thatâ€| I was in a D12 school, Huntington by thenâ€| Please tell me you were there at the time."

"Sorry, Kat, we never left Napa Valley, even for the holidays. We couldn't have met. But it's me, there, and you, and â€| him."

"Yeah, and him."

I take a deep breath, trying to erase the tears from my face as I turn to him.

"Do you think it's our turn?"

He looks at me with these eyes, into which I could lose myself forever, clearly pondering his answer.

"You know I don't believe in this, right?" He asks. I nod. I know he doesn't. He's the rational one of our dynamic duo.

"But I know there's something between us, way more than friendship. This connection we have, it's not what normal friends share. It's deeper, stronger, more intimate than what most people have."

He turns away, his right hand coming to his mop of curls, betraying his nervousness.

"I know what I feel about you, Kat, and it has nothing to do with the words of a dying man."

I gulp, almost too afraid to ask. Because I know this is a life changing moment.

"How do you feel about me?" I ask, trying not to let my voice shake too much.

"You don't know?" Why can't he look at me? I want to scream at him to just turn his head a little, so he can see me, see I'm nothing without him. Because that's what I am, and I want him to know it, finally.

"Maybe I need you to tell me?"

But he doesn't say a word, finally turning to look at me, really look, as if he could see my soul.

I wait, because I know what he's looking for. He's searching for that little crack that will make him back up on his words, that will grant me an exit. But he won't find it.

I wait, because I know the best is to come. I can feel it in my body. In the air around us, in the buzzing that seems to linger in the room.

I wait, because I can be patient for the things that matter. I can wait for hours to find the right piece of a puzzle.

I wait, because I finally found that missing part of me.

I wait until he's ready.

I see it, in his eyes, this little spark of hope, telling me it's my time to speak.

I've never been good with words.

I'm more for actions.

So I show him.

I lean into his warmth slowly, giving him long enough a time to move. But I know he won't. I know now he's been waiting for me to be ready, as he always does, every day.

I lean closer to his face, my lips a whisper away from his forehead, his eyes, lingering on his cheeks, almost touching him, depriving me of the contact I've craved for so long without knowing it.

I don't go to his lips, not yet. He needs words, right now my Peeta.

"It's you, Peeta. And not because it's your turn." I hear him swallow my whispers, and see him closing his eyes. "It's you because you're it for me, because there's no life if you're not in."

I cave in and start kissing a line on his jaw - I might have fantasized about doing this for a long time now, if i'm being completely honest- until I reach my destination.

Finally my lips are on his, finally I taste him.

His hands find my back, my hair, as we kiss each other, I can't help but finally, run my fingers into his curls, savoring the feel of him all around me, at long last.

â€œ

I wake up with Peeta's hand around my naked waist, only this time, I don't move.

I'm where I belong, finally.

Tomorrow will be soon enough to think about work, about the real life waiting for us. Tonight, we belong to one another.

\* \* \*

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>I'm thegirlfromoverthepond on tumblr.<p>

End  
file.